

But between the inner and outer perimeter walls and beyond the outer perimeter wall, the area has been denuded by livestock grazing.

There was no record of the bustard in Nashik district (Rahmani 1989), although it was recorded in the neighbouring districts of Ahmednagar and Dhulia. Rahmani (1989) mentions unconfirmed reports of its occurrence in Nashik district. We think it worth putting on record the first confirmed sighting of this highly threatened species from a hitherto unreported site.

The fact that these birds are present in the area at least since 1974, and the scientific community was oblivious to their presence, calls for renewed intensive efforts to identify areas where bustard populations are still present. This should give a better understanding of its status in the country. Constant monitoring of the

population will tell whether bustards are seen in this area throughout the year, or that they come only for breeding.

The only threat to the bustards in this high security area are flying aircrafts, but since the flight frequency is very low, the probability of an aircraft hitting a bustard is also low.

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### 13. SIGHTING OF SOCIABLE LAPWING *VANELLUS GREGARIUS* IN KACHCHH DISTRICT, GUJARAT

While on a field trip to Lala Bustard Sanctuary, in Abdasa taluka, Kachchh district, we sighted a pair of sociable lapwing *Vanellus gregarius* on December 29, 1998 at 0900 hrs, feeding in a ploughed field close to Lala village. The birds were in non-breeding or winter plumage, and were foraging actively. The ploughed field was set amidst fallow land and degraded grassland. The birds had a very distinct white supercilium, a black eye-stripe extending to the nape, and a black crown. The upper part of the bird was ashy brown and the entire belly was white. The bill and legs were somewhat black. Our efforts to find the birds again the next day were in vain.

This species is threatened globally and

considered vulnerable (Collar *et al.* 1994). The last sighting in Kachchh was in August 1947 (G.M.B. Sparks, unpublished data; M.K. Himmatsinhji, *pers. comm.*). Dharmakumarsinhji (1956) has mentioned that it is an irregular visitor, not common and usually seen during the cold (winter) months. Ali and Ripley (1995) have also mentioned that it is a migrant, found in dry wastelands, ploughed fields and stubble. Collar *et al.* (1994) say that it uses grasslands and wetlands, including littoral habitats.

The sociable lapwing is said to breed in southeastern Russia and to migrate south to North Africa and India, including Kachchh and other parts of Gujarat (Dharmakumarsinhji 1956).

Efforts are being made by us to look for this species in Kachchh, as part of a project on Conservation of the Rare and Endangered Biodiversity of Kachchh, Gujarat, funded by the Gujarat Ecology Commission.

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14. OCCURRENCE OF THE WHITE-WINGED BLACK TERN  
*CHLIDONIAS LEUCOPTERUS* IN KERALA

During our field trips in the Enamavu, Kole wetlands of Thrissur, Kerala, between September 12-15, 1998, Paul, P.M.K., C.K. Sujithkumar and I came across a few unfamiliar tern species feeding over the freshly drained paddy fields along with whiskered terns *Chlidonias hybrida*. Some of these were in partial breeding or post-breeding plumage, so that we could easily identify them as the white-winged black tern *Chlidonias leucopterus*.

On the evening of September 12, we saw at least three individuals (one adult and two juveniles) of this species feeding amongst a group of the whiskered terns. During flight, the black underwing coverts were the most noticeable feature of the adult bird. Mantle and back, black or blackish. Upper wing mostly smoky grey. Upper primaries deep ashy grey. A trace of whitish panel on upperwing coverts.

Forehead white. Hind crown and ear-coverts (behind eyes) black. A white collar on hind neck. Underparts wholly white. Under primaries grey. Rump and tail totally pure white. But the middle tail feathers were light grey. The shallow tail fork was sometimes visible (sometimes appeared nearly square). Bill black, legs and feet red. The red legs were occasionally seen as they trailed in feeding flight.

The mantle and back of the juveniles were dark brown; upper wing smoky grey; an indistinct paler panel on upperwing coverts. Underwing mostly whitish; no black on underwing coverts. The remaining features were similar to the adult.

The following afternoon, we observed the same number of birds feeding in the same area. But the underparts of the adult bird were quite different, being black mottled with white.